



**A geopolitical analysis of the 2014 European Union Maritime Security
Strategy between classical realism and commercial liberalism**

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Abstract

Which theory of international relations (classical realism or commercial liberalism) best explains the adoption of 2014 Maritime Security Strategy (MSS)? This research question drives the current master's thesis and explains the author's interest in the maritime dimension of the European Union's (EU) foreign policy.

Overall, previous scholars have analysed maritime security from an international point of view (Germond, 2015), from the humanitarian perspective of saving lives at sea (Riddervold, 2014), from the Somali case study about piracy (Cordner, 2010) and from the analyses of its risks and threats (Bueger, 2015a). The primary methodology for investigating a similar topic is interviewing policymakers, military officers and civilians working for maritime non-governmental organisations (Riddervold, 2018). However, this study involves analysing the official EU's documents and national military strategies published in the timeframe between the first European maritime operation, 2008 Atalanta, and the adoption of the MSS in June 2014.

In order to carry out a similar study, the researcher has proposed a total of six propositions, derived from the analyses of the two theories, and has applied the so-called "congruence analysis" to find which empirical observations were more traceable, that is, more congruent with the theoretical hypotheses. Classical realism expects that states want to maximise their security in the maritime domain. On the other hand, commercial liberalism expects that the strategy was adopted for economic motivations. In the end, the author has found evidence for the congruence between the liberal propositions and the empirical observations so this theory was more suited in explaining the adoption of the maritime strategy. Out of a total of ninety-six documents analyzed and one hundred and forty-seven total codes found, the author could conclude that the "Trade" motivation was identified more than any of the other five, for a total of 34 retrieved codes. This result has shown that the main driving force, for the adoption of the maritime strategy, was the trade at sea.

Keywords: European Union Maritime Security Strategy, maritime security, European Union foreign policy, classical realism, commercial liberalism, congruence analysis.

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List of abbreviations

BMVg: Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, German Federal Ministry of Defence

BMWi: Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie, German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy

CSDP: Common Security and Defence Policy

Council: Council of the European Union

EP: European Parliament

EU: European Union

HR/VP: High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

IMP: Integrated Maritime Policy

IR: International Relations

MSS: Maritime Security Strategy

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

UN: United Nations

UK: United Kingdom

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Introduction

In June 2014, the member states of the European Union (EU) have unanimously adopted the "Maritime Security Strategy" (MSS) (Council, 2014a) aimed at identifying the strategic and economic interests, and also geopolitical threats in the maritime domain. This policy laid the foundation for the subsequent operations, the 2015 Sophia for saving lives at sea and the 2020 Irini about the arms' embargo in Libya. The 2014 MSS is a crucial framework for these operations since it has defined the areas of interests of the EU with a great emphasis on the dimension of illegal threats. The EU has established once more its commitment towards the sea by extending the mandate of Operation Irini until the end of March 2023 (Council, 2021).

The Community is now well aware of the strategic importance of maritime security and, in particular, of the Mediterranean Sea which was the geographical area of greatest interest in the strategy and now of maritime operations. During the seven years of its preparation, the 2014 MSS has been crafted as a framework by civilian and military actors of the then twenty-eight member states of the EU. As a community with maritime borders for the majority of its territory, the EU needed a shared policy to improve its governance at sea and here lies the cruciality of the MSS, which will be analysed in the current thesis.

Problem statement

Regarding the European maritime security, previous scholars (Germond, 2015; Riddervold, 2018) have analysed this thematic area of foreign policy by looking at the different actors involved, at the elements of the European sea power and the EU's geopolitical discourse. These two academics have provided the most comprehensive works up-to-date because they have interviewed policymakers, military personnel and civilians working for maritime non-governmental organisations in order to establish the differences between these actors. In particular, Germond (2015) has argued that realism was the theory able to explain the development of the EU's behaviour in the maritime domain regarding the case of Somali piracy. On the other hand, Riddervold (2018) has clarified that the humanitarian reflection has moved the EU to take an interest of migrants' crises. Therefore, she uses the constructivist theory to explain the interests of the member states in saving lives at sea.

Research question

Among the various theories of international relations (Burchill et al., 2005), the researcher has limited the present thesis to two of them: realism and liberalism. In particular, the sub-schools called classical realism and commercial liberalism were chosen to explain the adoption of the maritime policy.

In particular, the first theory involves the traditional concept of the sea as a place of conflicting interests driven by the search for power. This has led the author to formulate three propositions. Specifically, the first proposition focuses on the preferences of the three most powerful member states, the second one suggests that the strategy was adopted for tackling illegal threats and the third one puts emphasis on the role of the three largest navies in the Mediterranean.

The second theory, commercial liberalism, expects that the economic benefits would have played a fundamental role in the adoption of the MSS. For this reason, the author will investigate the dimensions of trade, maritime tourism and blue economy.

Given that the current analysis wants to shed light on the motivations that led to the final document, the research question can be formulated as follows:

Which theory of international relations (classical realism or commercial liberalism) best explains the adoption of the 2014 MSS?

Methods

To find evidence for the research question, this thesis will present the congruence analysis that's a method for scholars willing to contribute to the academic discourse in a specific field of analysis (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). For answering this question, it will be necessary to refer to the propositions highlighted in the "Theoretical framework" chapter. These theoretical propositions will be investigated by analysing official sources of the European institutions, available on sites such as "Consilium", by selecting the category "foreign affairs", and the "Register of Commission documents" for the minutes of the meeting of the Commissions and the European Parliament. In addition, this thesis will include the official documents of the various temporary presidency of the Council of the EU.

The chosen timeframe involves the years between 2008, the year of the first maritime operation carried out by the EU, and 2014, the year of the approval of MSS. A total of ninety-six documents are part of this analysis and one hundred and forty-seven codes have been found by the author.

The analysis of these official documents will allow the researcher to discuss which theory can best explain the development of this policy and what was the main driver for its adoption.

Contributions

This study could provide more insights on both theoretical and societal levels. Regarding the first aspect, this thesis fits into the existing body of the literature in the analysis of the driving forces for the adoption of the 2014 MSS. While previous scholars have dealt with the topic of maritime security by interviewing policymakers and military officers (Germond, 2015; Riddervold, 2018), much less has been done to analyze EU documents in terms of content. A similar investigation could shed light on the textual motivations of the European and national actors involved in the adoption of the 2014 MSS. This thesis' scientific relevance concerns the study of the typology of their behavior regarding the maritime dimension of the EU foreign policy. A similar analysis involves two theories, in a single case study, could be useful for the future contributions in analysing other issues at stake in this field.

On the other hand, the societal relevance of this thesis concerns the geopolitical importance of the Mediterranean Sea for the EU and for its citizens. This Sea is the border of the Community with the African and Middle Eastern neighborhoods and has historically represented a crucial place for the exchange of ideas, cultures and economies. More than half a century ago, Roucek (1953) described the Mediterranean as "the most important highway in history" (p. 347) because it was "the route where Orient and Occident and Europe and Africa met in a commerce of goods and culture and military rivalry" (p.348). Nowadays this Sea is mostly known for being the theatre where Western democracies meet their feeble North African and Middle Eastern democratic counterparts (Golini et al., 2014). In conclusion, the societal contribution concerns the increasing Mediterranean's relevance for the EU, for its citizens and for its foreign policy.

Structure of the thesis

This thesis is made of six other chapters. Chapter 2 provides the debate on the definition of maritime security, a reflection on the actors involved in maritime governance and the previous studies in this field, mostly about Somali piracy. Subsequently, it involves a chronological overview of the maritime operations of the EU by starting with Operation Atalanta in 2008 and ending with the current Operation Irini in Libya.

Chapter 3 examines the theoretical framework used by the researcher to explain the reasons that have led to the development and the adoption of the MSS in 2014: in particular, this chapter includes the analysis of realist and liberal schools by looking at their main assumptions.

Furthermore, it also provides the features of the two sub-schools that will be specifically part of the analysis, namely classical realism and commercial liberalism, by investigating their applications to the policy examined. For this reason, the researcher formulates six propositions, three for each school, which empirical observations will test. Regarding classical realism, the focus is based on the realist assumption of achieving power and establishing the hegemonic role of the EU in the Mediterranean. At the same time, commercial liberalism analyses the benefits of securing the sea for improving the maritime trade and for protecting the blue economy.

Chapter 4 concerns the methodology. In fact, the researcher explains the concept of congruence analysis, which will be used to find evidence for the theoretical propositions. The author provides further rationales about the analysis structure and also the thesis's operationalisation that will involve different codes valid for the textual analysis. The current research is based on official documents from the European institutions, such as the Council of Ministers and the Commission, and on the programmes of the different temporary presidencies of the Council. By investigating the actual presence of the codes related to the theories, a similar desk study will provide more insights to understand the reasons for adopting this maritime policy.

Subsequently, Chapter 5 involves the analysis of the main documents. It involves analysing the propositions taken singularly, by looking at these documents, to explain the development and the nature of the EU's commitment towards the sea.

Chapter 6 summarizes the main results of this qualitative analysis since the researcher argues whether evidence has been found for the propositions or not. The chapter shows that the main reasons for the adoption of this maritime policy were strictly related to the economic aspects within the commercial liberalism's debate.

In conclusion, the seventh and last chapter sums up the findings of the congruence analysis and also suggests further avenues of research in maritime security.

Literature review

In this section, firstly, the concept of “maritime security” will be analysed to develop the EU’s strategies in this domain. Subsequently, the focus will move to describe the 2014 MSS and its recent evolutions with the 2015 Operation Sophia and the 2020 Operation Irini. These last two missions will be briefly discussed as they fit into the community framework. Specifically, they respond to the first of the five areas in which the EU perceived the need to strengthen its unified response: external action (Council, 2014, p.8). Therefore, the author's interest in these operations is justified because prevention and speed of response to the challenges of the sea are the crucial points of the 2014 MSS as European actors considered it essential to collaborate.

Defining maritime security

To start this analysis, it’s necessary to define maritime security since this word was absent from the academic debate until the beginning of this century (Germond, 2015a). Bueger (2015a) considers it the new buzzword of international relations.

Defining this concept is complicated because the very nature of the sea is multifaceted. After all, it might be difficult to regulate it (Germond & Germond-Duret, 2016), facilitating the emergence of security threats (Germond, 2015b).

Maritime security has been described by looking at its threats or phenomena, such as people trafficking by sea, illicit arms and drug trafficking, piracy, environmental malfeasance, and terrorism (United Nations, 2008). For these reasons, the definition of maritime security seems to be problematic since the previous contributions agree on the difficulty of framing this issue. Nevertheless, this thesis uses the definition of maritime security "as a set of policies, regulations, measures and operations to secure the maritime domain" provided by Germond (2015a, p.137) as valid since the interest of those who work in this field lies in need to secure the context in which the maritime activities take place.

Actors of the maritime security

Since maritime security governance is also intricate (Germond, 2018), it’s essential to analyse the different actors involved, who are economic and public stakeholders and, finally, tourists. The first category includes the actor who exploits the sea for us to gain an economic advantage, such as the fishing and shipping industries.

In contrast, the second type involves military powers, such as the national navies or coast guards, and any other category whose task is to monitor the sea to prevent any possible illegal or harmful activity (Germond, 2018). These two actors should cooperate to reap the most significant benefits. Finally, tourists are the final recipients of the products since they finance the local territory during their holidays.

Previous literature on maritime security

In maritime security, previous scholars have primarily focused on the region of the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean by looking, particularly, at the case of Somali piracy. Regarding this case, scholars agree on its highly probable ability to affect other neighbouring geographical areas due to its strategic location in the European trade corridor that can lead to consider this place as a crucial region geopolitically (Cordner, 2010). Particularly, as Middleton (2008) argued, the ships would have been forced to circumnavigate the Cape of Good Hope to avoid crossing the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Aden, which were the places where pirate activities proliferated. The only way to allow maritime commercial and economic operators to operate peacefully at sea was to prepare a joint action, both by the UN and the EU, which would protect not only the interests of these stakeholders but also of the local population (Riddervold, 2014). The consequences of this insecurity would have led to global and not just regional effects, coming to be considered as an attack on the existing global order (Szuma, 2015).

While Flynn (2014) considers that the protection of the economic dimension as the main reason behind the commitment of the UN and the EU, on the other hand, Riddervold (2014) analyses the deployment of the 2008 Operation Atalanta in the light of the need of providing humanitarian support to the local population and also she concludes that a solution to this problem could have been found in a joint commitment by these two institutions to protect maritime safety.

However, Bueger (2015b) argued that a powerless politico-legislative system was the cause and that they led to the proliferation of piracy. In the presence of a weak judicial system and maritime zones that are poorly controlled and secured, the possibility of illegal activities proliferating increases. The reason for this assertion by the author lies, in essence, in the lack of operational controls at sea and the absence of certainty of the penalty for maritime criminals.

This conclusion is consistent with Potter's (2004) assumption that Somali weakness lay precisely in the lack of an efficient central government which was, on the contrary, oppressed by an intricate system of corruption. In summary, it's possible to conclude that illegal activities, such as piracy, could work with even a minimal form of instability, be it political, economic or legislative.

For this reason, while focusing on the case of Somalia as the “paradigm of a failed state” (Pardo Sauvageot, 2009, p. 2), previous literature agrees on the opportunity to tackle threats at sea efficiently only if there is a solid military and civilian background of authorities that can monitor the application of a maritime strategy. If the sea is not patrolled and securitized, the risks and threats will proliferate (Bueger, 2015a).

In conclusion, it’s relevant to point out that the EU cannot be exempted from these problems of dangers at sea, although its democratic structures are far more solid than the Somali ones. For this reason, the previous academic contributions play a role of fundamental importance as they clarify the contexts in which these dangers are most stimulated to take place. Furthermore, these scholars explain how a global, and not just regional, intervention is necessary to secure the operations of the three different types of actors to make a maritime strategy genuinely effective.

Moving to the case of the EU, there are two main academic contributions. Firstly, Germond (2015) has analysed European maritime security in a more international outlook. Specifically, he has investigated the EU’s behaviour in the Indian Ocean, during 2008 Operation Atalanta, launched for tackling Somali piracy. His main findings consider this field of foreign policy as driven by realist interests of achieving power and establishing a leading position in a certain region.

In addition, the crucial point of view of the EU has been investigated by Riddervold (2018), who interviewed policymakers and officers of some national navies involved in the bargaining process. According to the civil servants interviewed, the final operational result was a hybrid. In particular, she argues that the EU acted initially in military terms in the maritime domain since the attention was focused on the strategic results, such as securing the sea from piracy and illegal threats.

Subsequently, the Commission's influence was perceived as so intrusive that attention had shifted to the need to finalize the strategy as quickly as possible to tackle long-term issues such as climate change towards a more substantial environmental commitment rather than short-term issues. According to Riddervold (2018), this Institution had the merits of shifting the perspective to a long-term one concerned about harmful usages of the maritime environment.

This is the great distinction between these two scholars. While Germond (2015) argued that the EU was interested in acting at sea to protect its interests and demonstrate its military might, Riddervold (2018) analysed Operation Sophia and concluded that it was humanitarian. From the analysis of these two manuals, it appears evident that there isn’t congruence of scholars’ reflections.

The EU at sea

This section will analyse the development of EU maritime operations before the adoption of the MSS.

The first maritime operation was Operation Atalanta, held in Somalia in 2008. It was initially made of two different steps: in the first one, the Council called for a joint action (Council, 2008a) aimed at exchanging information already in possession of the UN, which had previously begun its operations to combat the pirate phenomenon in Somalia (UN, 2008). Subsequently, the EU approved another action for delivering humanitarian aid to local people, by using the tools of the “deterrence, prevention and repression of acts of piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia” (Council, 2008). This mission was carried out in the Indian Ocean, which was the least secure maritime domain, with the Greek flagship in command of the operations and with the logistical help by the French, Spanish, and German navies (Pardo Sauvageot, 2009). Finally, since this mission fell within the context of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), it presupposed the free contribution of each member state without any obligation (Riddervold, 2014).

While this initial operation has involved different EU members, the subsequent maritime operation was deployed only by Italy, and it’s relevant to point it out since the focus of the EU has moved to the Mediterranean Sea. In response to the remarkable flow of migrants, in October 2013, the Italian government commenced the “Operation Mare Nostrum” by referring to the traditional name given from Latins to the Mediterranean Sea (Tellegen-Couperus, 1993, p. 32). This maritime action had a twofold purpose: “safeguarding human life at sea and bringing to justice human traffickers and migrant smugglers” (Marina Militare, 2015). It was meant to control the borders, to prevent illegal immigration and, also, it had the merit of tackling deadly shipwrecks for those who crossed the sea (Patalano, 2015).

After only one year from its approval and over 150 thousand migrants saved (International Organization for Migration, 2014), this maritime mission was replaced by Operation Triton (ANSA, 2014), conducted by Frontex, the EU’s border security agency. Albeit it has involved only Italian naval forces, “Mare Nostrum” demonstrated that an intervention was necessary to protect human life (Cuttitta, 2015) and the only way to obtain such a result was cooperating, within the EU, and trying to prepare a unitary document that summarized the maritime strategy of the then twenty-eight member states. In this sense, this Operation has laid the foundations for a synergistic contrast to the threats of the sea within the members of the Community.

In this sense, a subsequent urgency for a general framework, in the maritime domain, at the EU’s level was perceived as crucial for the maritime interests of the Community. The reason behind a similar shared policy was the lack of a shared strategy that would make it possible to optimize

military interventions designed to protect the human life of migrants at sea and to safeguard the maritime stability of the Mediterranean (Patalano, 2015). For this reason, the experience of the sole Italian efforts can be legitimately considered as the ground base for the final definition of the joint strategy, that is the MSS.

A new maritime policy: the 2014 MSS

The launch of the analysed operations shows that the maritime missions are becoming a relevant and integral part of the broad dimension of the EU's foreign policy. This turnaround, defined by Riddervold (2018) as "Maritime turn", can only be traced in the light of the adoption of the MSS in 2014 (Germond, 2015b) because the EU lacked a shared policy for the sea. In particular, the two subsequent missions, Sophia and Irini, have the operational characteristics established for the first time in the 2014 MSS policy document, which will be discussed in the current paragraph. The adoption of this strategy was only the conclusion of a much longer process of analysis of maritime threats, which began during the Spanish presidency of the Council. Specifically, the Spanish government shared one of its main priorities on the agenda for the usual six months of the rotating presidency: the consolidation of the security sphere of the European citizens in response to the increasing challenges posed by the migration (Spanish Presidency, 2010). Although maritime safety represented an essential point on the Spanish agenda, it was not possible to prepare for the adoption of any programmatic text because, as Hix and Høyland (2011) rightly explain, the time available for presidencies is too limited for the numerous policies and issues that they usually would like to implement.

Nonetheless, the Spanish government was able to initiate the discussion on the basic needs of maritime security by bringing the subject to the table of the Council, which adopted the relative conclusions (Council, 2010a), by proposing the idea of a future common maritime strategy. However, successive presidencies did not share a similar need to continue this path, and therefore the idea of such a community framework did not undergo any decisive change until 2013. Mainly, the concomitance between the outbreak of revolutions in North African countries and the incoming temporary Greek presidency accelerated the work of the European institutions for delivering a similar common strategy (Council, 2013a).

After the communication by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP), Federica Mogherini, on the elements of interests of the EU in the sea (Commission, 2014), the final version of the MSS was unanimously adopted (Council, 2014a). This document consists of fifteen pages in which the context, aims, principles of application, and the EU's interests in the maritime sector are analysed.

The most crucial section refers to the ways of strengthening the joint response of the European institutions, which involves half of the document in its entirety.

This policy represents the very first case in which the EU has tried to elaborate on the maritime threats and how to tackle them by providing a comprehensive framework (Landman, 2015) since the different member states managed the previous maritime operations while a single-action plan had never been envisaged. For the first time, this policy suggests the need for a cross-sectoral European approach in responding to maritime threats because the different actors must cooperate to achieve the results. The document states that the sea is a relevant dimension of the EU's foreign and defence policy because it can be a crucial driver of growth and prosperity for the EU and the European citizens (Council, 2014a). The emphasis on the generalized economic welfare of the community is present because the EU places high confidence on the necessity of a secure sea, especially for improving the trade, tourism, and maritime environments (Council, 2014a).

Recent developments: “Operation Sophia” and “Operation IRINI”

In 2015, one year after the adoption of the MSS, the EU launched a new mission in the Mediterranean Sea in the light of the dramatic shipwreck that occurred in the Strait of Sicily on April 18, 2015 (Marceca, Viviano & Ziniti, 2015), in which an unknown number of migrants perished (Corriere Della Sera, 2015). The launch of a similar operation was inserted in the context of the adoption of the 2014 MSS, in particular from the point of view of the synergy of actions of the different governmental and non-governmental actors at sea. Bevilacqua (2017) argues that this mission was indeed a novelty as it pursued smugglers and, at the same time, set out to rescue migrants at sea. These two issues were previously stated in the 2014 MSS among the different "Maritime security risks and threats" (Council, 2014, p.7). This operation was named Sophia because of the birth of a baby onboard one of the German frigates operating in the Central Mediterranean Sea (Council, 2015a).

As perfectly shown from the case of its renaming, its main aim was the “disruption of the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks in the Southern Central Mediterranean” (Council, 2015b). In this regard, Tardy (2015) argues that the main novelty of this operation was making usage of the coercion power which involves the usage of force against the human traffickers who do not comply with international maritime legislation. This coercive element must be understood as a kind of self-defence since the maritime forces of the member states are required to act to protect the lives of those who cross the Mediterranean Sea, and the only to achieve such a result was to punish in an exemplary way those who exploit the migrant business (Tardy, 2015).

In conclusion, the ultimate mission approved, known as “Operation IRINI”, which means “Peace” in modern Greek (Al Jazeera, 2020), is mainly aimed at limiting the arms trafficking in Libya, following the resolutions on arms embargoes made by the United Nations (Council, 2020a). Biscop (2020) points out that this mission can tackle the smugglers, who derive illicit gains from the illicit trafficking of migrants and are placed in line with the previous one since it condemns those responsible for the deadly shipwrecks.

Theoretical framework

In this chapter realism and liberalism, will be first discussed since they are the two main theories of international relations. In particular, the author will explain their main assumptions in general and then regarding the EU's foreign policy and the EU's maritime security.

Realism

The realist school of thought is the oldest and probably, from a historical point of view, the most relevant one, among all the theories of international relations, because its existence can even be dated to the fifth century BC (Keohane, 1986).

Core assumptions

The struggle for power is the main driving force of states, according to realist scholars. However, this isn't the sole feature of the theory since Wohlforth (2017) describes the international actors as egoist because they are humans. They don't want to diminish their benefits by sharing them with others. Jackson, Sørensen and Møller (2019) argue that this assumption provides a "pessimistic view of human nature" (p.2) because there is no room for mutual trust among the actors. For this reason, realists consider the international area as an anarchic theatre because there isn't a central authority in charge of controlling the relationships between the different actors. Since states are worried about their survival (Waltz, 1979), they fear each other's, and they consider war as the only viable way to survive in such an unpredictable and unstable reality. States are highly pragmatic (Snyder, 2004) because they know their interests and want to maximize their gains and survive in a similar uncertain reality (Mearsheimer, 2001). Once they have gained their hegemonic position in the system maximum, they will feel secure. Otherwise, they will continue to increase their power more and more consistently (Mearsheimer, 2001).

At this stage, someone might think that cooperation is probably impossible in a similar context. In reverse, states can cooperate in few cases (Mearsheimer, 2001). However, such cooperation could, at any moment, be undermined by the selfish and predatory behaviours of the actors of international politics (Jervis, 1999). In particular, this situation isn't persistent since the actors continue to consider it relevant to pursue their relative gains if compared to those obtained by enemies. This assumption is linked with the perception of the so-called "Zero-sum game" in which realist scholars perceive the world.

Specifically, this happens when the gain of an actor is perfectly balanced by the loss of his counterpart, which pushes the great world powers to pursue this goal when they relate to each other (Mearsheimer, 2001). From a military perspective, the opportunities are twofold: to strengthen one's military resources or to join forces with another actor aiming to balance advantages and disadvantages (Germond, 2015).

In conclusion, states will probably decide to interrupt the cooperation because the risk of a reversal of the alliance by the other party is a ubiquitous concern. Indeed, they fear the losses they feel about incurring by cooperating with their enemies and not by pursuing their relative gains.

Classical realism

After analysing the main features of the realist theory, this section will analyse one of the sub-schools, namely classical realism.

Keohane (1986) considers the Greek history Thucydides as the founder of this school since he regards the conflict as necessary because these two great powers needed to face and fight each other to let excel one of them, namely a hegemon. As a classical realist, Thucydides puts a strong emphasis on the concept of power as the driving force of the history of politics and the relationships between countries.

In addition, also Niccolò Machiavelli, the main intellectual in the Medici's Florence, in his masterpiece "The Prince" (1513), explains, in one of his major quotes from this book, how "the end justifies the means". He argues that one should make usage of every tool to achieve his goals in an unscrupulous manner. The main task of any political leader, in achieving the highest strategic advantage in comparison with his opponents, concerns the concept of surviving.

Finally, also British philosopher Thomas Hobbes is considered a crucial figure for classical realism since he argues that "every man should be a wolf for his counterpart", which expresses the selfish and predatory nature of the man who aims to survive at the expense of his fellow man (1668). Also, in this case, the fear of the other is a fundamental and perpetual element. However, this situation can be overcome with the establishment of a sovereign state, which will take care of managing the power relations between the actors. The link with the subsequent forms of realism can be found in the reflection about human nature, perceived in a negative manner, which then led to the realist assumption of egoistic states since they are constituted of egoistic human beings.

Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes's contributions served as a strong foundation for the subsequent development of the classical realist theory.

The modern version of the classical school has been proposed again by Hans Morgenthau, who shares the six fundamental principles of political realism (1948). In the first, the author shows how

politics is rooted in human nature, which means that the behaviour of the state behaves in a manner consistent with the predatory nature of individuals, who are the final decision-makers. In addition, Morgenthau also points out the actions of the actors are driven by the concept of interest, both in a personal and rational way, which aims at achieving power. The third principle consists in a more historical reflection because he explains that power is “universally valid” (p.8) and also “is unaffected by the circumstances of time and place” (p.8), which means that all the different actors, in any time during the history, have encountered similar motivations aimed at gaining more power than their counterparts.

Classical realism and maritime security

In the current analysis, it's necessary to formulate propositions in order to answer the research question. Formulating the propositions takes place, as a practice, after analysing the previous theoretical contributions, and this section will provide the reasonings for the realist propositions. Overall, before discussing more in details the realist propositions, it is relevant to point out that, for its scholars, the achievement of security is the main driving force of states in international politics.

The first proposition derived from classical realism concerns the power, in the decision-making process, of certain leading member states of the EU. More precisely, Hix and Høyland analyse the evolution over time of the voting power of the Council (2011, p.65) since this latter institution is the sole decision-maker with regards to the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). In this light, in a realist way of thinking, it's possible to formulate a proposition that analyses the influence of the three primary member states at that time: Germany, France and the United Kingdom (UK), which was still part of the EU at the time of the approval of the maritime policy. These three powerful member states might have pushed forward the development of the MSS for establishing the hegemonic power of the entire EU in the context of the weak Mediterranean Sea. Establishing one's leadership in the European institutions first and the maritime domain of the Mediterranean Sea can be considered a realistic goal since strategic interests drive it. In fact, in its typical military realist meaning, maritime safety concerns the achievement of power and the survival of an actor at the other party's expense. For these reasons, as Riddervold (2018) argued, the greater relevance of the Community's main political decision-makers could be considered the condition of subsistence of the maritime strategy itself since these three main states could be the most important to push for its adoption in times quick. Only through their drive, determined by greater decision-making power (Hix & Høyland, 2011), their positive commitment towards this strategy could have influenced the other member states, still reluctant, to accept the development of the new policy. Such an ability to influence the decisions of other member states would represent the interests of Germany, France,

and the UK in the adoption of the 2014 MSS in the delicate and unstable maritime context of the Mediterranean Sea. Finally, the first proposition can be formulated as follows:

The adoption of the 2014 MSS reflects the preferences of the three most powerful member states namely Germany, France, and the United Kingdom.

The second application of classical realism to the case study of the 2014 MSS concerns the threats at sea and the perceived need from the European institutions to secure the maritime domain for tackling these challenges.

More in details, Boyer (2007) provides a clear distinction of the menaces in the Mediterranean Sea's context by considering terrorism, illegal immigration, the illicit trafficking in drugs and the proliferation of weapons as the main threats for the EU in this domain (p. 77).

The reflection that now arises concerns why the EU refrains from acting at sea to contrast them effectively. This can be explained by the transnational feature (Bueger & Edmunds, 2020) of the threats, which sometimes might stop the authorities to act. In addition, Germond (2015) argues that, in theory, the EU would have multiple military strengths, which are, however, partially blocked by its complex political structure. Particularly, since the decision-making action of the CSDP is limited by the intervention of the Commission and the Council, the security policy of the EU depends heavily on the contributions of the member countries since there is no Community naval fleet. For this reason, making the different national interests coincide is also the greatest weakness in this area of EU foreign policy. However, this 2014 MSS might have been adopted for providing a shared framework helpful in tackling the security threats in this domain for realist purposes. This second application of classical realism theory to maritime safety can be further explained considering the maritime realism described by Matsuda (2020) in a recent essay analysing Japan's maritime behaviour in the last half-century. In particular, the scholar considers maritime realism the use of means and resources used at sea to control the domain itself. This behaviour is realistic since nation-states are interested in imposing their power at sea to defeat the main threats in this context so that they can operate safely in a specific maritime geographical region.

Furthermore, according to Germond (2015), a state has a considerable maritime force when it can optimize the resources at its disposal, such as the number of ships, officers or simply sailors, naval positions, ports, weapons available to the military on board. This idea is in line with the famous assertion by American Admiral Mahan (1890), who explained the British domination in controlling the major trade routes, for over three centuries, by looking at its supremacy of means in the maritime domain.

The idea of supremacy in the sea is a typical realist assumption because it involves the opportunity of using the power in this domain. This concept can be linked with the decision to counter the dangers at sea, that's an operation part of the concept of "Hard maritime security" described by Flynn (2016). He argues that the usage of maritime power involves, from this realistic point of view, the appeal of military force to defend naval spaces, its strategic interests, and its hegemony in a maritime region. In this sense, the adoption of the 2014 MSS could be understood as member states' perception about the increase in challenges and illegal activities. This reflection would therefore have prepared this new EU instrument to counter these dangers. For this reason, the second proposition can be formulated as follows:

The 2014 MSS was adopted to tackle security threats at sea.

The third proposition concerns both geographical and military power dimensions. Mainly, McCabe, Sanders and Speller (2019) argue that there is a difference in the degree to which the states with small navies can raise their voice within the EU's institutions, to claim for achieving their geopolitical interests. Briefly, this depends on the fact that they haven't as much military and strategic weight as the naval militias of the most militarily powerful countries.

They analyse the cases of different EU's member states, both in the Mediterranean and in the Baltic Seas, to find evidence for the differences in the relevance of the maritime security, based on the different dimension of the navies themselves. Southern member states and their respective navies might be strong advocates of the adoption of the 2014 MSS since they are geographically the most affected by the strategy itself. More in particular, in the Mediterranean context, the authors consider Croatia, Malta and Cyprus as small navies while Italy, Greece and Spain have the largest navies in the Mediterranean. It's also relevant to add that France is considered a Central European member state rather than a Southern one in maritime security.

In the current thesis, the researcher will investigate the behaviours of Italian, Greek and Spanish governments to find evidence for the security concerns of these member states. Since securing the sea is the main driver for adopting the strategy in the realist approach, the author will analyse the three main navies in the Mediterranean Sea to check if they really perceive the urgency of challenging the threats.

Finally, the third classical realist proposition states as follows:

Italy, Greece and Spain, the member states having the largest navies in the Mediterranean Sea, will favour the 2014 MSS to tackle threats at sea.

Liberalism

Core assumptions

The liberal theory of international relations is a direct consequence of the Enlightenment philosophical contributions of John Locke, Immanuel Kant and Jean-Jacques Rousseau since they share the same assumption: all men are equal (Owen, 1994). Consequently, the “freedom of individuals” is the main criterion of this intellectual tradition (Doyle, 2017) because it entails the citizens' main democratic rights.

In liberal theory, there is a strong emphasis on the relationships between actors and the international system. One of the main liberal scholars, Moravcsik (1997), points out the three main features. The first one concerns the “primacy of societal actors” (p.516), who usually prefer not to take useless risks, while the second is about the “representation and state preferences” (p. 518), according to which democratic institutions are the bearers of the preferences expressed by citizens.

Finally, the “interdependence and international system” (p.520) consider which conflicts have a reason to exist only when there is a real motivation that justifies their appeal. In this sense, it's then clear that liberals don't share the realist assumption on the necessity of making wars to achieve the proposed goals.

Conversely, they argue the relevance of cooperating, within the state and with other actors, to gain mutual benefits instead of starting a costly war. Furthermore, the liberals believe that cooperation between the different international actors is possible, and above all, unlike the realists, it can also be lasting over time and not temporary. In this sense, the concept of peace is considered fundamental for liberals. It's defined as the “normal state of affairs” (Burchill, 2005, p.58) in contraposition with the anarchical state described by realists.

In addition, two leading liberal political scientists, such as Keohane and Nye (2012), argue that, in the liberal world, actors seek to benefit from relative gains as they manage to mediate with the preferences of their counterparts to avoid unnecessary conflicts. Indeed, liberals abjure the realistic reflection on absolute gains that lead the different actors to want to prevail over each other. These gains are absolute because the states cooperate, thanks to the valuable contribution of democratic institutions that act as a conduit for their preferences. In this sense, the focus on cooperation is persistent in the liberal school of thought discourse. Liberals argue that states have the potential to achieve global peace only if they organize their ties through the creation of modern and effective institutions (Snyder, 2004). For this reason, Owen (1994) establishes the modern theory of “democratic peace” according to which it's very unlikely for democratic states to engage in conflicts with other democratic counterparts because they both share the same hesitations and

criticisms about the regrettable usage of war to achieve the goals. In contrary to what the realists argued, violence and war will decrease individual freedoms, which are considered the fundamental prerequisite.

In addition, unlike realist scholars, liberals generally consider war deleterious as it produces a high toll on money and human lives. Instead of fighting, they argue that actors, which are the states, will have greater benefits if they don't make wars but instead devote themselves to pursuing economic benefits through, for example, free trade. Nonetheless, it's still relevant to explain how liberals believe that war is necessary when it serves to achieve liberal purposes (Owen, 1994), which correspond to restoring the personal freedoms and rights typical of modern democracies.

Like in the realist theory, also in liberalism, the actors are rational, but they are also risk-averse (Moravcsik, 1997) because they understand the adverse side effects of wars. Consequently, Doyle (2017) writes about the liberal concept of preservation according to which states should prefer to pursue economic interests rather than wasting the limited resources in any other military action.

Commercial liberalism

Moravcsik (1997) argues the existence of the three main clusters of liberalism, namely ideational, commercial, and republican liberalism. The author of this thesis is interested in analysing the commercial liberalism, whose emphasis is on the economic interests of international actors.

Scholars argue the relevance of free trade for achieving absolute gains. For this reason, the researcher is interested in investigating the commercial interests as the drivers of the adoption of this strategy. Historically, its first proponent was the Scottish economist Adam Smith who argued the necessity of moving from a mercantilist-based economy to free trade.

For this reason, this school is the oldest one within the liberal tradition (Morgan, 2019). This economic reflection serves as the theoretical ground of commercial liberalism since it considers commerce the main way to achieve peace and security. In this light, Paine (1791) argues that the most relevant effect of free trade can be seen in the prosperity of the reality since the economic exchanges between countries will decrease the military conflicts between themselves (Walker & Rousseau, 2016). For commercial liberalists, the economy is the driving force of the state's behaviour at both national and international levels (Moravcsik, 1997). Since states perceive wars as costly and unnecessary, they prefer to pursue benefits by making "trans-border economic transactions" (Moravcsik, 2001). For this reason, states act only when there is an economic incentive rather than the achievement of security and relative power, as it happens in the realist theory. In conclusion, commercial liberalism's scholars conclude that the economic

interdependence, originated by the pursuing of free trade, will be able to refrain the states from appealing to the costly wars.

Commercial liberalism and maritime security

As for the theory of classical realism, commercial liberalism will also be analysed to explain the development and the reasons for the adoption of the 2014 MSS through the elaboration of three propositions derived from the previous theoretical analysis. By starting with the first one, given that liberals argue that states care the most about their economies, it will be supposed that they have prepared this maritime policy with the explicit intention of safeguarding the commercial sector. In this light, the 2014 MSS can be seen as the policy to achieve a safer trade at sea for the member states. In fact, for commercial liberals, states prefer to pursue economic interests by trading with other national and transnational actors (Moravcsik, 1997). This theoretical strand can explain the economic interests of the EU's member states because the Union is the third biggest importer in the fishing industry, which is then one of the leading shared economic interests. Securing the sea means strengthening the commercial relationships with other non-European states, institutions, and strategic trading partners, and this would benefit the Community. This first proposition suggests that the development and approval of such strategy might have depended on the perceived necessity of protecting the economic interests at sea, rather than to establish the military and strategic power of the navies of the different member states. For all these reasons, the 2014 MSS can be seen as the consequence of the perceived benefits of the economic advantages of securing the seas. Overall, the first proposition of commercial liberalism can be formulated as follows:

The 2014 MSS was adopted to improve trade relations between countries at sea.

Furthermore, it's also possible to advance a second proposition related to maritime tourism. Tourism makes up the main characteristics of commercial liberalism as it would bring economic benefits to the coastal communities of the member states of the EU since this sector represents a significant sector for their economies. Specifically, given that Dritsakis (2012) has argued that the economies of Mediterranean member states highly rely on the maritime domain, it might be predictable that Southern states will have interests to complete the MSS also for protecting another driver of their economies: tourism. Tourism is one of the interests considered as relevant by the European institutions (Council, 2014a) because it falls into the first of the three categories of stakeholders involved in ocean governance since its operators use the sea to earn an economic profit (Germond, 2018). Adopting a community strategy that can safeguard the tourism sector of the EU's

maritime spaces could represent a great opportunity for coastal communities' well-being (Larsen, 2019). Here lies the importance of analysing the tourist reasons for adopting the strategy. Since these coastal regions consider this sector as relevant, they would try to push forward the adoption of the strategy with a stronger focus on the improvement of the tourist infrastructures and skills than has ever done before. Instead of investing in a stronger military navy in a typical commercial liberal way of thinking, states prefer to prioritize the more profitable sectors to improve revenues. In this light, the economic incentive underlying the adoption of the strategy is the perceived necessity of being more competitive in the field of tourism in the short term. By following these logics, the Mediterranean member states could have interests in orientating the preferences by bringing the tourism's motivation into the bargaining table. For these reasons, the second proposition can be formulated as follows:

Southern Member States were motivated by improving their maritime tourism in adopting the 2014 MSS.

The third and last proposition concerns the environmental motivation behind the adoption of the 2014 MSS. The seas contribute to the national economies of coastal countries because they hold a substantial economic potential that can bring a benefit to the development and growth of the different actors involved in this domain (Findlay, 2020). For this reason, protecting the economic interests of member states at the maritime level also involves the environmental dimension since without sustainability, it isn't possible to preserve the so-called "Blue economy" (Riddervold, 2018). Pauli (2010) originally proposed the latter concept, which defined its potential for both coastal and non-coastal countries if they can sustainably protect the sea. Subsequently, the World Bank provided a programmatic definition according to which the blue economy is the "sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs while preserving the health of ocean ecosystem" (World Bank, 2017). In this way, the blue growth is strongly linked with its usage for achieving the economic growth of local maritime communities (Hadjimichael, 2018). Particularly, referring to the case of the EU, in the last document preceding the adoption of the strategy (Council, 2014), there is also a discussion about the necessity of tackling illegal fishing, protecting the safety of fishing vessels flying the European flag and conservation of biodiversity to avoid incur environmental risks. This commitment to protecting the blue domain can be considered a liberal goal since the actors are aware of the economic benefits of safeguarding the sea.

In fact, by following the main assumptions of the liberal theory, states prefer to cooperate for a collective cause rather than fighting for achieving personal benefits. In this case, the cause is

protecting the maritime domain from the exploitation and maritime crimes perpetrated illegally. The shared interest is economical because the sea must be preserved for improving national economies, for commercial liberals.

In addition, the preservation of the sea isn't the only part of the blue economy since it also involves its link with other illegal activities. More in details, as Bueger and Edmunds (2020) discuss, the main crime in the maritime domain is illegal fishing that has been defined as the activities conducted “by national or foreign vessels in waters under the jurisdiction of a state, without the permission of that state, or in contravention of its laws and regulations” (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2019). This is a challenge and, at the same time, also a problem for the EU’s economy since the sea represents an opportunity for growth and development both from a naturalistic point of view but also from an economic point of view as the heritage of the coastal states of the EU is also represented by their fishing tradition. In this sense, it is possible to understand the MSS as motivated by the interests of commercial liberalism, given that the worsening of illegal fishing would undermine the economies of coastal countries. Therefore, in the perspective of this new maritime strategy, the protection of the sea could represent an opportunity for growth since the economies of these countries depend primarily on the safety of their fishermen. In addition, the prevention of similar illegal phenomenon perpetuated by criminals of the sea would devastate fish stocks and affect the maritime ecosystem (Bueger & Edmunds, 2020).

For all these reasons, it's then possible to formulate the following third proposition about the environmental dimension of maritime security:

The 2014 MSS was adopted to safeguard the maritime environment by protecting the blue economy.

Research design

To answer the research question, the researcher has decided to trace the policy-making process of the 2014 MSS to highlight what factors were crucial for the adoption of the final text. For this reason, this chapter will define the methodological design, called congruence analysis (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). In addition, the researcher will justify why other relevant theories of international relations have remained out of this analysis. The main part of this chapter will be devoted to the explanation of the operationalization of the thesis itself since the author will establish the links between the six propositions and their related codes by providing examples from the official European documents for all of them. In conclusion, the arguments about the external and the international validity will be presented to make clear how this thesis will contribute to the existing debate on maritime security.

The choice of congruence analysis

The topic of this thesis concerns the maritime dimension of EU security, and the focus is inherent to the 2014 MSS, whose task was to provide a collective framework for member states regarding the maritime security of the EU. To investigate a similar policy, from a strictly methodological point of view, there are different ways of analysing in the political science field. For example, employing a quantitative analysis through the usage of multivariate regression (Graddy, 1998) could help establish the consequences of the maritime strategy. However, this methodology cannot be applied since this thesis involves analysing only one event, the 2014 MSS, and is called a single case study (N=1). For similar studies, it isn't possible to carry out a quantitative analysis.

In conclusion, given that maritime governance is a highly complex practice for the multiplicity of variables involved and for the difficulty in establishing causality between the actions of the different actors, this policy will be analysed by applying the methodology called “congruence analysis”. This method is used because the researcher wants to verify the applicability and capacity of the theories in explaining the commitment towards the sea in the context of the 2014 MSS. The fundamental book written by Blatter and Haverland (2012) is the perfect tool for discerning which methodology to use. The authors provide an intelligent analysis of different methodologies, and one of these is the congruence analysis, which will be used in this thesis. The choice underlying this decision concerns the fact that this methodology involves small-N research that leads the scholar to analyse case studies to verify which theoretical contribution can explain a given phenomenon,

compared to the other theories available, within the same research area. As rightly pointed out by the authors, congruence analysis is “the most appropriate method for researchers who want to contribute to the theoretical discourse within a field of research” (p.203). This assumption also applies to this thesis. The author wants to analyse the EU’s foreign policy by verifying how it’s possible to explain the emergence of a specific EU policy, in this case, inherent to the maritime domain, using the two main theories of international relations.

Selection of theories

Blatter and Haverland (2012) argue that the selection of theories is a fundamental prerequisite for a practical congruence analysis (p.167). For this reason, this section will present the choices and their motivations that led the researcher to exclude the other relevant theories of international relations. Since there isn’t a fixed number of theories that must be analysed (p. 173), the author will decide which ones can be considered most functional to be investigated. At this stage, it’s relevant to understand the reasoning that led the researcher to investigate only two schools and not the other different theories.

In addition to realism and liberalism, the field of research of international politics involve numerous different main paradigms. The other third main theory is called constructivism and has emerged after the end of the Cold War (Reus-Smit, 2005). One of the main scholars of this school, Alexander Wendt (1992), argues that the behaviours of human beings towards objects are driven by the meaning of the objects themselves. For this reason, the interactions among states are driven by ideational factors rather than strictly material ones (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001). Since ideas, identities and values are the main instruments in the hands of states within the environment of the international system, this theory has been excluded as it's highly abstract. This choice of the researcher lies in the difficulty of translating the main constructivist assumptions into propositions because the concepts of the constructivist approach are too abstract.

Finally, the theory of green politics is the newest one in the field (Paterson, 2005). It focuses, as pointed out by the name itself, on the environmental features of international relations’ decisions (Paterson, Doran & Barry, 2010). Although this thesis involves a hypothesis on the environmental aspect of maritime safety through the analysis of the so-called blue growth, choosing this particular school would have been too restrictive and reductive as it would have forced the researcher to formulate a single proposition relating to the perceived need to protect the sea in terms of sustainability. The choice to focus on environmental issues, which are typical of green theory, would have forced the author to deprive himself of the other two propositions that analyse trade and tourism in the maritime domain and which could be crucial drivers of the 2014 MSS.

This discussion about the limits of these additional theories leaves the remaining two schools, realism and liberalism, since they have been studied more systematically than the other seven. For this reason, having a more comprehensive theoretical framework, they can be translated into the propositions that have been proposed in the previous chapter and can subsequently be tested with empirical observations. In summary, in light of these highlighted points, the researcher has decided to include only classical realism and commercial liberalism.

Operationalization

This section will be devoted to the operationalisation to find evidence for the propositions that will be used for answering the research question of this thesis, formulated as follows:

Which theory of international relations (classical realism or commercial liberalism) best explains the adoption of 2014 MSS?

This research question falls within the pro-typical questions described by Blatter and Haverland (2012, p.145) since it serves to verify in what proportion the emergence of this specific policy can be interpreted in the light of the two main research lines of international relations. In conclusion, the authors explain how it will be possible to deduce favourable conclusions only for the theory that will present the highest level of congruence with the empirical observations at the end of their discussion. For this reason, only one theory will be recognized as the only theory, out of the two, able to explain the drivers of the member states' commitment with regards to this maritime framework established in 2014.

In this thesis, evidence will be found by critically analysing the documents, the press statements, the minutes, the programmes, and the official declarations of the different actors, such as the member states and the European institutions like the Council, involved in the development and the subsequent approval of the 2014 MSS. Specifically, three types of documents will be analysed in this analysis. The first category involves the official documents published by both Commission and European Council: this thesis will mainly use legislative and official documents in the context of the maritime security of the EU. They involve Council Decisions, Council Conclusions, Council Joint Actions and Commission Decisions together with the documents of the temporary Presidencies of the Council. All these resources have been retrieved from the official European website, "Consilium" (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/documents-publications/public-register/public-register-search/>), by selecting the category "Foreign affairs" among the various categories available and the 2008-2014 period as timeframe.

Furthermore, the second category includes the minutes of the meetings of the different groups in the Commissions and the European Parliament, which have been collected respectively from the “Register of Commission documents” (<https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/>) and the “Consilium” websites. This thesis looks at all the central bodies of the EU to have a more comprehensive picture of the path towards the maritime domain. In conclusion, it is relevant to point out that the retrieved documents refer to the period between 2008, the year of the first maritime mission, and 2014, that is the one in which there was the approval of the MSS, in the seven years which slowly led to the awareness of the importance of joint action in this sector.

Thirdly, the different propositions will be investigated by analysing the official institutional documents published by the relevant Ministries of the different member states of the EU. Especially, in the first realist proposition, the researcher will explore the documents submitted by the British Ministry of Defence (Her Majesty's Government, 2014), by the French Prime Minister (the French Republic, 2014) and by the German Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure (BMVI, 2012) to test the hegemonic assumption. These documents have the potential to be considered crucial to explain the This cross-checking of sources will serve to increase the internal validity of the thesis since the analysis of a more significant number of documents will benefit the researcher from the possibility of reaching the necessary conclusions in the "Discussion of findings" section. The same will also happen for the third realist proposition since the official documents from the governmental authorities of Greece (Hellenic Republic, 2014), Italy (Italian Presidency, 2014) and Spain (Spanish Presidency, 2010) will be investigated to allow the researcher to conclude the final arguments.

Finally, it's relevant to point out that the total amount of documents retrieved and analysed, as part of this thesis, is equal to ninety-six. In addition, its annual distribution is shown in the underlying Chart 1. An immediate reflection that arises simply from the observation of this bar chart concerns the increase in importance, over time, of the issue of maritime safety. Remarkably, the number of documents quadrupled in 2014, if compared with the first year of the analysis.

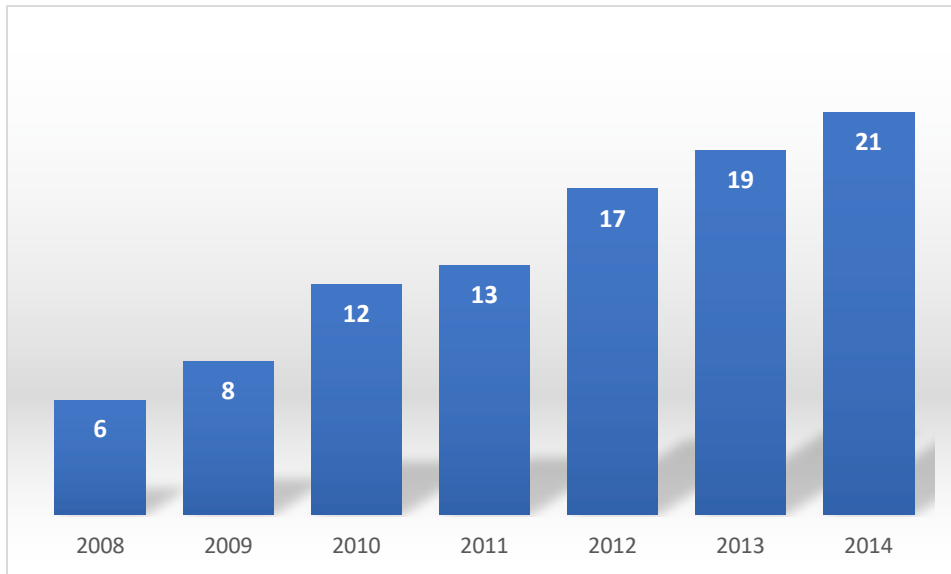


Chart 1. Annual distribution of the thesis' documents, between 2008 and 2014

To carry out a similar analysis, the author will analyse the documents using two main coding frameworks, one for classical realism and one for commercial liberalism. Every document will be investigated through these frameworks, which are made of one code for any proposition. These codes represent the concrete measurement of the expecting proposition derived from the theoretical analysis. The most important aspect of similar research concerns the connection between the codes and the propositions described in the previous section since the software will provide results for the theoretical expectations. In addition, Table 1 and 2 will show examples for any proposition and its code in order to show the reader the reasoned decisions underlying the encoding of government documents.

By investigating the codes useful for the textual analysis in the "Atlas.ti" software, it will be possible to find evidence for these hypotheses and, in the "results" section, to provide final comments on the real findings. Since this thesis involves analysing large text bodies retrieved in the form of official governmental documents, the author needs to analyse the documents through qualitative-content software. For this reason, this reliable methodological tool in the social sciences field has been chosen (Friese, Soratto & Pires, 2018). In addition, it has been argued that "Atlas.ti can enhance credibility building by making the research processes more transparent and replicable" (Hwang, 2008, p.525).

As Vaismoradi and Snelgrove (2019) argue, a similar textual analysis is crucial in helping the author to divide the texts into smaller parts to explore them individually and more in details than if these documents were considered in their entirety. Moreover, the researcher will extract the codes from the official documents. These codes, proposed in the following two tables, will serve as a

practical way to finding evidence empirically of the main reasons for the adoption of the maritime strategy since they refer to the specific propositions, highlighted in the “Theoretical framework” chapter. The frequency of the codes in the retrieved documents, will contribute to understanding what's the best theory of international relations in explaining the long path to the approval of this policy. In this light, the analysis of sources will be presented through the lenses of classical realism and commercial liberalism by evaluating the language used in the process.

Realist codes

By starting with the realist approach, the first proposition argues that “The adoption of the 2014 MSS reflects the preferences of the three most powerful member states namely Germany, France, and the United Kingdom”. Specifically, it will be analysed by looking at the documents in which the three main member states, namely Germany, France and the UK, have raised their interests and have expressed their willingness to act in the maritime domain to establish the global position of the EU at sea.

Furthermore, the second proposition states that “The 2014 MSS was adopted to tackle security threats at sea” and refers to the realist assumption about the necessity of acting against the risks to secure the established position in contrast with other counterparts. This dimension will be analysed by investigating the reference to words such as “Maritime surveillance”, “Challenges”, “Threats”, and finally “Control of borders”, in the light of the ongoing refugees’ crisis at that time.

In conclusion, the third proposition suggests that "Italy, Greece and Spain, the member states having the largest navies in the Mediterranean Sea, will be in favour of the 2014 MSS to tackle threats at sea”, so it investigates the role of these three countries, based on their military capacity, in the decision-making process of the 2014 MSS. Particularly, this proposition will be investigated by looking at the documents in which representatives of these countries have raised their voice by pointing out, for example, a quick resolution of the threats at sea or by calling for the final draft of the 2104 MSS, which they might have cared about for their geographical position in the Mediterranean Sea. To sum up, Table 1 shows the codes and the examples for all the propositions.

Propositions	Codes	Examples
The adoption of the 2014 MSS reflects the preferences of the three most powerful member states namely Germany, France, and the United Kingdom.	Security	"The objective is to secure the EU's maritime security interests against risks and threats in the global maritime domain." (Council, 2014b, p.1).
The 2014 MSS was adopted to tackle security threats at sea.	Threats	"The objective of integrated, well-functioning and coordinated maritime surveillance can be motivated by common threats." (Council, 2009a, p.2).
Italy, Greece and Spain, the member states having the largest navies in the Mediterranean Sea, will be in favour of the 2014 MSS to tackle threats at sea.	Security challenges	"Greece underlines the importance of improving the EU's ability to respond to emerging security challenges." (Hellenic Republic, 2014, p.14).

Table 1. Coding scheme of the classical realism.

Liberal codes

The first proposition hypothesizes that the main driver for the establishment of the 2014 MSS might have been the economic interests and, specifically, the trade at sea, which corresponds to the 90% of the total amount (Council, 2014a). For this reason, this proposition will state what follows: "The 2014 MSS was adopted to improve trade relations between countries at sea". This will be analysed by looking at the different official documents published by the correspondent EU's institutions, aimed at investigating the possible benefits of the policy for the commercial context before the approval of the policy itself to find references to the necessity of acting together for protecting the commerce. In brief, the researcher will look for the "trade" code to find evidence for the perceived relevance of this driver in the adoption of the 2104 MSS.

The second proposition will investigate the dimension of maritime tourism of the EU. In particular, by stating that "Southern Member States were motivated by improving their maritime tourism in

adopting the 2014 MSS", the researcher is interested in looking for the behaviour of these member states in the adoption's process of this strategy. The code "Maritime tourism" will be the one sought to highlight the predominance of maritime safety understood as an action aimed at protecting tour operators and, also, real consumers of the scenic, historical, and cultural beauties of the European coasts, which constitute one of the main sources of wealth (Council, 2012a).

In conclusion, the third and last proposition refers to the concept of blue growth and its relationship with the commercial, economic and tourist activities of the member states. Specifically, it states that "The 2014 MSS was approved to safeguard the maritime environment by protecting the blue economy". Furthermore, this strategy may have been prepared to safeguard the maritime environment, which represents a resource for coastal countries and which must therefore be protected from the multiplicity of dangers it may incur. In this light, the preservation of the blue domain is fundamental to "stimulate growth in the maritime sectors" (Council, 2012a, p.2). To verify this proposition, the researcher will analyse the documents in which there were explicit references to the usage of words like "Blue growth" and "Blue economy. This in-text analysis will verify how the protection of the maritime ecosystem could contribute to the added value of these member states. In conclusion, Table 2 sums up the different codes and sub-codes for this theoretical approach.

Propositions	Codes	Examples
The 2014 MSS was adopted to improve trade relations between countries at sea.	Trade	“Europe’s maritime interests are fundamentally linked to the well-being, prosperity and security of its citizens and communities. Some 90% of the EU’s external trade and 40% of its internal trade is transported by sea.” (Council, 2014c, p.2).
Southern Member States were motivated by improving their maritime tourism in adopting the 2014 MSS.	Maritime tourism	“Coastal and maritime tourism is the largest maritime activity in Europe and closely linked to many other parts of the economy.” (Council, 2014d, p.2).
The 2014 MSS was adopted to safeguard the maritime environment by protecting the blue economy.	Blue economy	"The Council [...] encourages the Commission to continue working on the appropriate development and implementation of sea basin strategies, where there is a demand and a perspective of clear added value, to support the Blue economy in coastal regions and enhance connectivity between coastal regions and with the hinterland.” (Council, 2012a, p.7)

Table 2. Coding scheme of the commercial liberalism.

Internal and external validity

Before concluding this chapter, it’s relevant to point out the internal and external validity of this research. Regarding the prior aspect, Blatter and Haverland (2012) explain that internal validity involves the level of congruence between the theoretical propositions and empirical observations. The higher this congruence is, the more suitable the theory is to explain a certain phenomenon. Concerning this research, the internal validity is guaranteed by the congruence, for example, by the causal relationship, between the theoretical expectations from classical realism and commercial liberalism and the documents that are part of the textual investigation. In this thesis, the emphasis is put on classical realism and commercial liberalism to understand which one can best explain the adoption of the 2014 MSS. The current analysis findings will be acceptable only in the case of a high degree of congruence between the proposition and the actual observations from the analysis of

the official governmental documents. However, the main weakness of this methodology concerns epistemological relativism, according to which the researcher could be partisan in the analysis of empirical observations. This would lead the research to be scientifically invalid as methodological fallacious. In this regard, Blatter and Haverland (2012) suggest that it's possible to limit this weakness through two types of controls: vertical and horizontal. The first aspect allows dividing theoretical propositions from empirical observations in order to prevent the circumstance of an inverse relationship. In addition, the horizontal control is implemented through the analysis of different theories, which are two in the present thesis, to verify which is more effective in explaining the empiric case under analysis, namely the 2014 MSS here.

Secondly, Mitchell and Jolley (2010) define external validity as the possibility of using the results of a given academic contribution outside the context of that same analysis towards a broader academic debate. This is possible in the case of a quantitative analysis since it includes dependent and independent variables and control variables within, such as applying a multivariate regression (Graddy, 1998). However, in the case of a case study, this process is more complicated because the analysis is qualitatively based. Blatter and Haverland (2012) argue that, in the congruence analysis, the congruence analysis allows to generalize the results obtained only within the theoretical discourse to previous contributions and not to others in different fields, in contrast to large-N cases (Johnson, Reynolds & Mycoff, 2015). Finally, specifically regarding this thesis, external validity consists of generalizing the results on the ability of one of the two major international relations theories to explain the launch of EU maritime missions. In conclusion, it's arguable that a theoretical generalization is possible if future scholars will decide to implement the following analysis starting from the same two significant strands of international relations.

Analysis

This chapter is meant to provide information on the data analysis. As pointed out in the previous chapter, the methodology applied will be the congruence analysis (Blatter & Haverland, 2012) since the researcher wants to investigate the main driving force for adopting the 2014 MSS.

In addition, in this chapter, the theoretical expectations will be analysed and discussed to present the results in the next chapter. The analysis of the official documents will be carried out by focusing on the multiple coding explained in the previous chapter.

Realism

Securing the sea

The first realist proposition investigates the role of the three main EU's member states, in terms of voting power, following the arguments of Hix and Høyland (2011, p.65): Germany, France and the UK, which was still part of the Community at the time of the adoption of the MSS. This section sheds light on the actual existence and the military hegemony of these countries since it should not be taken for granted that they were also militarily powerful and well-equipped countries and powerful states in the European decision-making process. The empirical observations, after the realist approach, provide very distinct insights about these three countries. Mainly, by starting with Germany, the author has found evidence for its strong commitment to establishing its hegemon role in the context of the Mediterranean Sea within the EU's environment. In fact, in 2011, the Federal Ministry of Defence (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, BMVg) has published a document containing its defence guidelines (BMVg, 2011) in which the goals and the interests of the national government were clarified. Germany states that fighting international terrorism and the other main threats at sea was a crucial task that needed to be achieved within the framework of the CSDP.

Moreover, particular emphasis was given to explain that Germany was aware of its crucial role in the European institutions and invited other member states to cooperate for improving the general defence of the EU and securing the sea from external threats. Subsequently, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie, BMWi) published another fundamental document, the "Sea Development Plan" (BMWi, 2012), in which the German maritime strategy within the EU was clarified. Indeed, Germany emphasized the need to "expand Europe's leading position internationally in the maritime context" (BMWi, 2012, p.9), which would

serve to counter present and imminent challenges at sea. Aware of its military competitiveness, the German government argued that maritime safety was a priority of the EU and that, therefore, a coherent and unitary decision should be taken as soon as possible. Through the entirety of this document, which consists of more than forty pages, Germany clearly explains how it is aware of its hegemonic role in the EU and how, likewise, states must cooperate to achieve a union of purpose capable of preparing a community instrument of maritime safety. Without such a strategy, the EU will not be competitive at sea and will not secure its borders from external dangers.

While Germany is firmly in favour of such a policy, the same cannot be said for Britain and France since both were more concerned with overseas maritime safety than the issues in the Mediterranean context. By starting with the UK, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) presented the document on the British maritime security one month before adopting the 2014 MSS (MoD, 2014). It's the most comprehensive and precise among the ones analysed in this thesis since it provides a clear definition of the threats in this domain and the interests perceived as relevant for the national economy of the UK. However, it's more focused on the security of the island itself and the securitization of the Overseas territories rather than the Southern hemisphere of the EU. After a first reference to the EU in terms of maritime security about the decisive British contribution under whose command the first mission, Operation Atalanta, had begun (MoD 2014, p. 26), it has been argued in the document that the UK "will play a leading role in developing an MSS" (p.40). However, this assertion was disproved by the facts as the UK only participated with one vessel in Operation Sophia (Navaltoday.com, 2016) and didn't take part in the Irini since it was no longer a member of the EU. These operations have been considered by Germond (2015) as the precursors of the 2014 MSS since they have shown a commitment towards the sea, even though the EU was still missing a shared strategy for the maritime domain.

Furthermore, the geographical focus of the British maritime security document was mainly oriented to the Gulf of Guinea as it is the outlet of the Suez Canal, to Atlantic cooperation with NATO to reaffirm the historic friendship with the United States and finally to the security of the island itself, the need for which transpires throughout the document.

Furthermore, like the UK, France is present in all the different seas worldwide because of its colonial history and is more interested in the international outlook of maritime security rather than the more limited Mediterranean region. This international commitment is also established in its "National strategy" published after the adoption of the 2014 MSS (French Republic, 2015), which is the only document in which the French government expresses its geopolitical intentions since, until then, it had not yet clarified its ambiguous position on maritime safety. In the complex of this strategy which consists of almost sixty pages, the Mediterranean is discussed only in a minority part

(p.6), explaining its unstable character. In particular, the need to act to counter the migratory flows of weapons and illegal substances that represent a potential danger for France and Europe as a whole is argued.

In conclusion, Germany is the only member state which was involved in the decision-making process by raising its powerful voice within the EU' institutions and the lack of interest shown by France and the UK can be explained in light of the academic contribution of Stöhs (2018) according to which Germany was one of the countries that had least contributed to EU strategic missions since the beginning of the new millennium. It's relevant to point out that the fourth and fifth member states, in terms of voting power, namely Italy and Spain, have been excluded from this proposition because they will be then analysed in the "Large Mediterranean navies" proposition, together with Greece, because of their crucial geographical position and military power in the Sea.

Finally, it's even more interesting to note that, although the German government had slowly decreased its military budget over the years (Stöhs, 2018), Germany had not shown decreasing interest in maritime security in the Mediterranean and, indeed, had subsequently specified even more of its interests at sea, unlike France and the UK. In the German case, a decrease in operational means and resources at sea wasn't accompanied by a lack of interest in adopting the 2014 MSS.

Responding to threats

Realist scholars generally emphasize the maximisation of security. In particular, Germond (2015) argues that the more secure the sea is, the stronger and longer-lasting will be the control of the EU as such over it. Following this reasoning, the usage of military means at sea can be considered to express a similar realist commitment towards the maritime environment.

One of the most explanatory statements of the EU's commitment to adopting the MSS for security reasons comes from the HR/VP Javier Solana. Specifically, in his communication to the Council and the European Parliament (Council, 2009b), he pointed out the real aim of the maritime strategy by stating its impact on several dimensions such as "maritime safety and security, border control, the marine environment, fisheries control, trade and economic interests of the European Union as well as general law enforcement and defence to facilitate sound decision making" (Council, 2009b, p.2). This document explains a crucial assumption regarding the application of the realist theory to maritime security: if the sea is controlled and protected by the naval and coastal authorities, then the other dimensions crucial to the security of a state are also protected.

Similarly, also the Swedes, in concluding their temporary presidency in 2009, explained how the main objective of a maritime policy was the establishment of an "integrated, well-functioning and coordinated maritime surveillance" since they perceived the urgency of tackling shared challenges,

such as piracy and illegal immigration, to protect the maritime domain from the emergence and the proliferation of these illegal activities (Swedish Presidency, 2009).

The message that emerges from the analysis of the multiplicity of documents relates to the perception of the European institutions that the protection of the safety of European citizens depends on the multi-dimensional approach aimed at countering threats from the sea (Council, 2012b). This reflection is well explained by the then HR/VP Mogherini, who, in her communication to the EP and the Council (Council, 2014e), explains how neglecting the protection of the seas would lead the EU to face numerous threats and risks, effectively transforming the Mediterranean into a scenario of conflict, terrorism and illegal activities.

In conclusion, this dimension has been found as the most relevant one of the realist theory for the number of retrieved codes, equal to 32 as shown in Figure 1, and also for the perceived relevance over time of the “Challenge/Threats” code.

Large Mediterranean navies

The third realist proposition is focused on the behaviour of the governments of the three largest navies in the Mediterranean Sea, according to McCabe, Sanders & Speller (2019), namely Greece, Italy, and Spain. In the light of the theoretical discussion, it's expected that they will advocate in favour of the strategy because of their geopolitical interests at stake. All these three member states held the temporary presidency of the Council during the timeframe considered: Spain in the first half of 2010, Greece in the first half of 2014 and Italy in the second of the same year, rightly a few weeks after the adoption of the body text of the 2014 MSS.

From the textual analysis of the documents, the researcher can conclude that all the three large Mediterranean navies have argued, over the timeframe considered, the need to adopt the 2014 MSS. However, they have done so with different emphasis. While Italy was interested in “strengthening the role of Mediterranean ports as terminals trade and tourism logistics” (Italian Presidency, 2014, p. 18), Spain and Greece focused on the main dangers of maritime security, including, above all, illegal trafficking of humans. Specifically, Spain, the first presidency chronologically, has generally expressed its interests in establishing the maritime strategy for security concerns since already during its presidency has expressed its doubts about a forecastable failure of stabilizing the Mediterranean region (Spanish Presidency, 2010). Moreover, in a government report (Romero Junquera, 2011), the Spanish Institute of Strategic Studies, part of the Spanish Ministry of Defence, retraced the main initial stages of the maritime strategy, defining the merit of its presidency of the Council in 2010 as the main proponent of a similar shared resolution. The most exciting reflection that emerged from the analysis of the document consists in the awareness of having to face common

EU security challenges and the importance of acting to counter maritime dangers. Already in 2010, the Spanish government was a strong advocate in favour of a communitarian approach to maritime security. In the document, there was a strong emphasis on the perceived necessity of drafting a policy to effectively manage the military resources when the author explained that a future strategy couldn't ignore a shared urgency on strategic-military interventions. Similarly, Greece was also a relevant supporter of the MSS because the security of the Mediterranean Sea was one of its major priorities (Hellenic Presidency, 2014). In particular, the focus was on securing the sea in the light of the daily waves of migrants fleeing from Northern Africa. The Greek commitment towards the sea, during its temporary presidency, could be explained as a way to secure the sea and to regulate the illegal flows of migrants.

Finally, the Italian government made its priorities explicit in the programmatic document published before the start of its temporary presidency (Italian Presidency, 2014). Italy explains its interest in safeguarding the coastal tourism potential of the Mediterranean for employment reasons, given that the sea represents an important voice of the Italian economy, rather than for military reasons, which consist in contrasting illegal activities at sea. In conclusion, there is no reference to maritime dangers such as, in particular, piracy and illegal trafficking of humans and weapons which are therefore not among the priorities of the Italian presidency.

In conclusion, Figure 1 shows the number of codes proposed in the operationalization table, found in the documents. In short, the realist codes have been found sixty-one times and the second hypothesis is the one that has found, in a truly detached way, the widest consensus. On the contrary, the hypothesis on the three main member states, in terms of voting power, is the least recorded and in a median position, the author has found the third proposition, the one concerning the major navies in the Mediterranean, which is second with just seven relevant codes more than to the last classified.

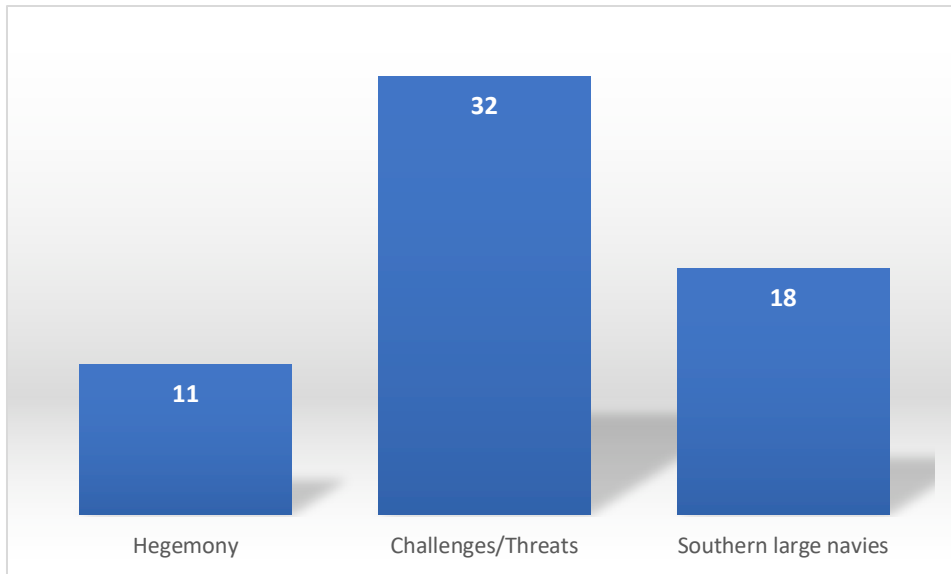


Figure 1. Number of traced codes, divided by the realist proposition.

Liberalism

Trade

Trade is the most present dimension of commercial liberalism in the documents analysed since the researcher has found 34 references to this dimension corresponding to the 23,13% of the general amount of codes. From the analysis of documents, the author has found a strong commitment of the EU and for the member states in protecting the sea at sea. In this light, it isn't surprising if the Council (2009c) has underlined that the Mediterranean Sea is equivalent to 30% of world maritime trade. Similarly, in the same year, HR/VP Solana stressed that it was necessary to prepare a maritime strategy to carry out operations to combat illegal activities more effectively would facilitate maritime trade since its operators would have the possibility to operate more quickly, effective and above all safe (Council, 2009b). The following year, from work in the EP's plenary, parliamentarians from different political groups agreed on the need to safeguard the maritime transport of the member states, in line with the sustainability criteria of the sea itself, to prevent trade had to incur unexpected expenses, dictated by the maritime dangers of the Mediterranean (Council, 2010b). Strengthening the competitiveness of the European commercial sector was one of the priorities of the "Maritime agenda for growth and jobs" (Council, 2012a) since it was argued that the EU needed to confirm its role as one of the world trade leaders.

Similarly, individual member states had also expressed their concerns in the absence of a policy that would safeguard the maritime trade. Particularly, Cyprus argued that economic growth was possible especially through the development of trade with non-European maritime partners (Cypriot

Presidency, 2012). In this light, the focus on developing a dialogue with the southern neighbourhood was also taken up by Greece. In particular, the Hellenic Presidency (2014) declared that trade was the "decisive tool for economic growth and competitiveness of the EU" (p.19). In addition, at the same time, the presidency's document focused on the importance of the international fishing trade as one of the main components of Greek exports. Overall, regarding the presidencies' documents, they all shared the same assumption that trade was a relevant dimension of the maritime domain and should have been a substantial part of the maritime strategy.

For this reason, it can be concluded that Mediterranean member states, such as Cyprus and Greece, placed great trust in maritime trade as they are geographically located in strategic positions for this economic area. Furthermore, it's relevant to highlight that Northern member states also perceived the trade at sea as a crucial topic. Particularly, the Irish presidency also argued that it was important to strengthen trade relations, in a safe maritime environment, with the countries of Northern Europe and, above all, to prepare an Atlantic strategy for trade (Irish Presidency, 2013). Although the Irish focus was not strictly on the Mediterranean for geographical reasons, it placed great trust. It underlined the need to build the foundations of maritime trade on the conclusions of the Limassol Declaration (Council, 2012c) as it was considered a crucial tool for its focus on growth and jobs in the maritime domain that transcended the merely Mediterranean dimension. Regarding this Declaration, the Cypriot presidency highlighted the need of "re-energizing the Integrated Maritime Policy" (Cypriot Presidency, 2012) for protecting the trade at sea since it can be considered as the most fundamental resources of maritime countries, especially in the light that the Mediterranean Sea is located in the corridor of the main trade routes of the world, such as the Gulf of Aden, which's one of the main places for piracy.

Tourism

The second proposition of commercial liberalism, with regards to the 2014 MSS, concerns the perceived relevance, for the Southern member states, of the maritime tourism's dimension. To find evidence for the national interests towards this economic aspect, the researcher has investigated the documents by looking at the usage of the term "Maritime tourism". The results were disappointing as this proposition has collected the lowest number of the three liberal ones, reaching a total of 23 references in the seven years considered. However, it's also remarkable to point out that this proposition has reached a higher relative percentage than two of the three realist propositions. This shows that, in general, maritime tourism is perceived as a more relevant aspect for the member states, in particular for the countries of southern Europe, in comparison with the realist security concerns.

Moving to the analysis of the documents retrieved, in 2009, the European Commission called for the IMP also in the touristic domain (Council, 2009c) by arguing that a similar policy could have benefited the Mediterranean coasts, which were lacking in terms of investments in managing their natural resources. During the Cypriot presidency of the Council, the 2012 Limassol Declaration (Council, 2012c) had the merits to bring the crucial topic of maritime tourism again into the bargaining table by arguing that the tourism needed to be highly “diversified and sustainable” (p.4). Particularly, the main aspects to consider in the establishment of a similar touristic strategy were mainly the improvements of the infrastructures, the seasonality of workers and the system of maritime and land connections. Only by approving a shared policy, the EU could have been competitive in maritime tourism. This Declaration led to a more comprehensive strategy about the Adriatic and Ionian Seas (Council, 2012d) in which maritime tourism has been described as the fastest economic activity of the Union, and it contributes to the coastal regions since it helps to create new jobs and to promote maritime cultural heritage.

Furthermore, after one year, in December 2013, the German rapporteur Meissner delivered, in the European Parliament, a report on maritime spatial planning (Council, 2013b). In particular, the interests of the EU in the touristic sector were highlighted again since a similar policy could “contribute to further national objectives, such as [...] promoting sustainable tourism” (p.24). In general, tourism is perceived by the European actors as a relevant economic activity, particularly in the coastal locations of the Community.

The blue economy and blue growth

For the last liberal proposition, the researcher has looked for references to the concept of “Blue economy” and the emphasis that the European institutions have placed on this environmental dimension. The result of the analysis of the documents reports a total of 29 references to this area of maritime safety which corresponds to almost 20% of the total of codes.

The application of the liberal theory to the blue economy suggests that protecting the maritime environment will stimulate economic growth since the sea represents a crucial element of the EU’s economy (Hadjimichael, 2018). By looking at the development of the concerns regarding this dimension, the first time that the blue growth was discussed can be seen in 2008. In fact, by referring to the “Blue paper” (Commission, 2007), the Council suggested the urgency of approving the Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) that was considered as a relevant tool for the economic development of the maritime environment (Council, 2008b). However, the Council no longer referred to the blue economy until, in 2012, the temporary Cypriot Presidency highlighted, within its program (Cypriot Presidency, 2012), that the protection of the marine environment was a

fundamental prerequisite. For the European economy, it was underlining the need for a “co-existence between man and the environment, in a place profoundly and truly hospitable” (Cypriot Presidency, 2012). This renewed focus on the maritime ecosystem led, in September 2012, the Commission to communicate to the European Parliament how the sea represented an opportunity for all of Europe. It was highlighted that blue growth represented a significant potential that had to be necessarily exploited to exploit “the unused potential in terms of growth and employment” (Council, 2012e). A relevant feature of this latter document concerns that the blue economy needs to be sustainable so that economic operators can benefit from it since the sea is a resource destined to run out. In 2013, the successive Irish and Lithuanian presidencies also expressed their interest in continuing the work to implement this initiative concerning blue growth precisely because they both shared the same reflection on the importance of investing in research and on innovation in maritime growth. The Irish programme suggests the need to “advancing the implementation of the Blue Growth initiative (Irish Presidency, 2013, p.14) for protecting the marine resources of the coastal states in the Mediterranean Sea sustainably. Finally, the second presidency is more concerned about the long-term effects of not protecting the blue environment. For this reason, the Lithuanians consider the IMP as the basis for establishing a functional policy aimed at protecting the blue domain from exploitation (Lithuanian Presidency, 2013). In short, the attention of the European institutions on the blue economy has focused more on the last two years preceding the approval of the 2014 EUMSS after the impetus of the Cypriot presidency in 2012.

Overall, Figure 2 below shows the number of codes found for the three different propositions of this school of thought.

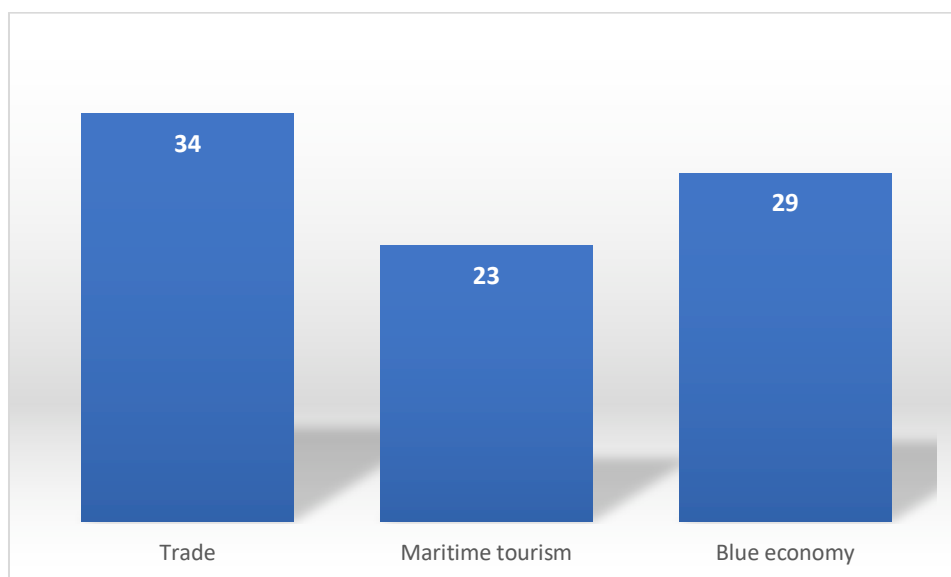


Figure 2. Number of traced codes, divided by the liberal proposition.

Discussion of findings

In this chapter, the results of the analysis will be discussed by comparing the propositions presented in chapter three with the empirical cases shown in the previous chapter. Every single hypothesis derived from the realist and liberal theories will be analysed to explain whether the researcher has found evidence or not. This process will be crucial for answering the research question of the current thesis by showing what theory of international relations can best explain the development and emergence of the 2014 EUMSS.

Furthermore, before getting into the discussion of the results, it's relevant to point out that the number of found codes is higher than the initial number of documents equal to 96. In some documents, the researcher has found references to more than one code simultaneously. For this reason, since certain documents refer to different maritime dimensions and propositions in the same body text, the general number of codes in these documents is 147 in the entirety of the 96 official documents of the EU analysed through the "Atlas.ti" software.

Realism

Three classical realist propositions have been supposed as the motivations for the development over time and the subsequent approval of the 2014 MSS. Specifically, they all have investigated the typical features of this sub-school by looking at different dimensions. While in the first case the focus was on the willingness by the three most powerful states of the EU of becoming the hegemon in the decision-making process with regards to the maritime policy, the second proposition has involved more specifically, the perceived necessity of tackling the security threats at sea, that's a typical characteristic of the oldest realist theory. Finally, the third one has focused on the military capacity of the member states, which's another feature of realism in the debate of military studies, and their boost for a quick resolution of the maritime threats.

By starting with the first proposition, evidence has been found about the hegemonic power of Germany but not about the French and British ones. By starting with France, it has had an almost uncertain behaviour regarding the decision-making process of the maritime strategy. The French navy took part in both Operation Atalanta in 2008 and Sophia in 2015 and the French government but also had expressed doubts about the actual application of a similar shared strategy (Riddervold, 2018). While during the Spanish presidency France was in favour of quick approval of a short text that spelt out the strategic priorities of the EU (Riddervold, 2018, p. 152), its behaviour became less explicit and more critical of the strategy's elaboration for a practical reason. France argued the need

to prepare a truly functional tool to allow a real integration of maritime resources and human capital in the Mediterranean context. These concerns appear decidedly blunted in the "National Strategy" document (French Republic, 2014) once the MSS has finally been adopted. For this reason, it's arguable that France had an intermediate behaviour since it has certainly always recognized the importance of the strategy even if, for a long time, it hasn't actively participated in the work for its adoption, despite being a significant maritime player.

Furthermore, Great Britain was even less involved in the decision-making process. Specifically, the UK has always been more reluctant to make its voice and has never really expressed its concerns about the absence of a coherent maritime strategy and the consequent problems that this lack could cause. It can be concluded that the UK didn't contribute to the strategy since no interest in the maritime security of the Mediterranean Sea has been shown.

On the other hand, Germany has shown its strong interest in achieving hegemony in the Mediterranean region by advocating for the adoption of the 2014 MSS. In particular, the German behaviour by supporting the strategy was clear in two different governmental documents published in 2011 (BMWg, 2011) and in 2012 (BMWi, 2012). They considered the relevance of securing the sea for geopolitical reasons. Germans advocated for the adoption of this strategy by suggesting a shared intervention in the EU under the CSDP. Germany was the powerful member states who pushed forward the practical application of the 2014 MSS only after this strategy was adopted. However, it's also true that the 2008 French presidency of the Council advocated for the beginning of Operation Atalanta in the same year Riddervold (2014), the same cannot be said for the 2014 MSS since no evidence has been found, by the researcher, to agree on a similar point from the analysis of the documents. While Riddervold (2014) has interviewed member states' officials and has highlighted that they considered France as a "political mobilizer" (p. 554), this study involves the analysis of first-hand documents which are not filtered by the personal opinion of policymakers and which, instead, directly represent the goals and objectives of the national government. For this reason, it can be concluded that evidence was found only for the German case since it was the only case in which there was a more enterprising commitment compared to France and the UK in terms of the numbers of codes found in the hegemonic proposition.,

Moving to the second proposition, all the different actors of the European institutions actively participated in the adoption of the 2014 MSS, so much so that this was the dimension repeatedly found by the researcher among the three propositions of the realist theory. Most of the documents analysed are consistent with the theoretical expectations according to which this strategy would have been adopted to combat dangers at sea through the use of "Hard maritime security" (Flynn, 2016): in this sense, the need acting with military resources has been repeatedly relieved by both the

temporary presidencies and the then HR/VPs. It's possible to argue that this proposition represents, from a realistic point of view, the main motivation for the adoption of the strategy since the researcher found thirty-two textual references, among the 147 total codes, to the need to promptly counter the challenges and threats at sea to make the Mediterranean. In essence, exactly one-third of the documents analysed by the author presented at least one reference to this dimension of strategic security, which leads the researcher to conclude that this was the most realistic driver of the three proposed in the "Theoretical framework" section.

In conclusion, the third and last proposition of classical realism involved the analysis of the behaviour of the member states with the largest military means. Specifically, the cases of Italian, Greek and Spanish navies have been investigated by the researcher. In particular, the Spanish government was one of the first member states to understand the relevance of adopting a maritime strategy when it called for further actions in the incoming years, at the end of its temporary presidency (Spanish Presidency, 2010). In the same vein, Greece gave the decisive impetus, starting from the inclusion of the completion of the strategy as the priority of the six-monthly presidency (Hellenic Republic, 2014), for the definitive adoption of the 2014 MSS so that in its presidency, the final text of the strategy was published. Finally, from the analysis of its presidency's document (Italian Presidency, 2014), Italy appeared more in favour of a resolution aimed at safeguarding the economic interests and employment potential of the Mediterranean states rather than countering, in a military sense, the dangers originating in the maritime dimension. The Italian reflections on sustainability, combined with the perceived need to protect the sea for reasons of growth, certainly fall within the theory of commercial liberalism rather than realism. There isn't any reference to naval power, and, indeed, great emphasis is placed on the economic aspects that should be strengthened to create wealth and well-being for coastal regions. For this reason, the researcher can argue that only Spain and Greece, among the Mediterranean states with a large navy, were in favour of adopting the 2014 MSS to combat maritime threats. Conversely, Italy was more interested in safeguarding its economy in a liberal sense rather than in a realist manner by showing its interests in securing the sea to protect the cultural heritage of national maritime locations (Italian Presidency, 2014). In this light, the author has found evidence for supporting the theoretical proposition for Spain and Greece only.

To sum up the previous discussion on realist findings, Chart 2 below shows graphically the relative percentages of codes found by the researcher, divided by the six propositions.

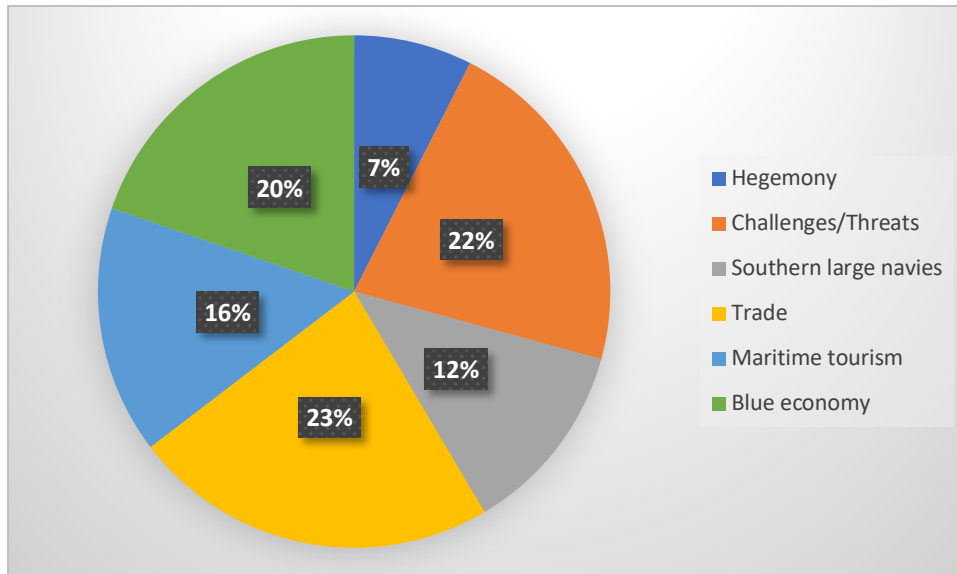


Chart 2. Graphical representation of codes found, in percentage.

Liberalism

The first proposition of commercial liberalism concerned the trade at sea as the main motivation for the adoption of 2014. Specifically, this proposition argued that “The 2014 MSS was adopted to improve trade relations between countries at sea”. The researcher has found evidence in thirty-four cases for the “Trade” code, so this dimension is the most relevant of the theory of commercial liberalism, if compared with maritime tourism and the blue economy. Moreover, the trade is also the code most found by the author in the present analysis: in fact, this result is the highest ever among the six propositions advanced by the author, with almost a quarter of the total number of codes found. The documents analysed have generally defined the need to protect the maritime trade from allowing economic growth and development of the coastal regions both in the Mediterranean (Cypriot Presidency, 2012; Hellenic Presidency, 2014) and in the Atlantic region, as in the Irish case (Irish Presidency, 2013).

The second proposition was formulated as follows: "In the process for the approval of the 2014 MSS, the influence of Southern Member States was driven by economic interests to protect their maritime tourism". In this light, the researcher has looked for the sub-code "maritime tourism" to find evidence for the perceived relevance of this aspect in the development of this policy in a commercial liberal way. Unfortunately, it's possible to conclude that this dimension was considered a driving force of the EU's economy only in a smaller number of cases if compared with the two other liberal propositions, as shown graphically. Specifically, the author has found evidence for this dimension twenty-three times corresponding to the 15% of the general amount of retrieved codes. For this reason, maritime tourism scored third and last among these three propositions. Although

their economies depend for a third on maritime tourism (Council, 2014), these states have not acted to bring this area to the attention. In this light, it shouldn't be surprising if, in the official document of the 2014 MSS (Council, 2014), the maritime tourism is cited, in a generic way, in the very first short paragraph of the text (p.2) by saying that "The EU depends on open, protected and secure seas and oceans for economic development, free trade, transport, energy security, tourism and good status of the marine environment" (p.2). In conclusion, although in the subsequent section, the document states that the ports have seen the passage of hundreds of millions of passengers pass through its ports each year, this isn't enough to argue that maritime tourism may have represented a significant driving force for the approval of this maritime strategy. Finally, although maritime tourism can employ 3.2 million people and produce an economic induced equally to €183 billion in gross value added (Council, 2014d), none of the European actors particularly pushed for tourism to be protected and modernized, leading the researcher to conclude that the main interest of the EU, at sea, wasn't maritime tourism.

The last proposition expected the motivation of safeguarding and protecting the blue economy as a driving force for the adoption of the 2014 MSS. The author found evidence for the EU's institutions' willingness to achieve this liberal goal for benefitting its consequent economic profits. It's striking to note that the emphasis on sustainably acting in the maritime environment also distinguished the northern states (Irish Presidency, 2013), which perceived the need to protect maritime resources. Furthermore, this emphasis on the significance of the blue growth for the EU is shown in the final document of the strategy (Council, 2014a), in which it's underlined that "unsustainable exploitation of marine and/or undersea resources [...] can lead to security risks" (p. 14). This explicit textual reference is connected to the concern of having to deal with maritime crises that would compromise Mediterranean economic activities, in fact penalizing the coastal member states of the EU. In this light, this assumption can be confirmed since almost thirty codes have been found for it, especially after Cyprus held the temporary six-month presidency (Cypriot Presidency, 2012).

In conclusion, Table 3 below shows the predominance of the liberal codes. These data allow the researcher to conclude that commercial liberalism is better suited than classical realism in explaining the adoption of the 2014 MSS. In particular, the liberal theory has scored an amount almost equivalent to two-thirds of the total codes retrieved by the author, with 86 references out of the 147 and over a relative 58%. It's also interesting to point out that the "Trade" dimension has been found for a higher amount than the sum of two propositions of classical realism, such as the first and the third. This result certifies even more substantially the predominance of the theory of commercial liberalism.

For this reason, the author can argue that the theoretical expectations of commercial liberalism were congruent with the actual empirical observations, verified by the systematic analysis of official government documents.

Theory	Proposition	Relative Percentage
Realism	Hegemony	7,48%
	Challenges/Threats	21,77%
	Southern large navies	12,24%
	Total of realist codes	41,49%
Liberalism	Trade	23,13%
	Tourism	15,65%
	Blue economy	19,73%
	Total of liberal codes	58,51%

Table 3. Relative percentages of retrieved codes for realist and liberal theories.

Conclusion

Novelty and findings of this study

This analysis has investigated the reasons for the adoption of the 2014 MSS by using the congruence analysis based on the theories of international relations. This thesis has involved the programmatic analysis of official government documents inherent to the 2014 MSS to verify if classical realism or commercial liberalism were able to explain the emergence of this unique maritime policy. The novelty of this analysis concerns the qualitative approach to analyse the documents retrieved from the main official EU's websites and national governmental studies and military documents of some different Ministries of Defence. The author has used the software "Atlas.ti". This decision is in contrast with the previous literature since scholars have interviewed policymakers, governmental and military officers. However, the author of this analysis was more interested in understanding the main states' general behaviour from the governmental point of view rather than the policymakers' one.

These documents were investigated by using a coding framework for both realist, and liberal approaches and the references to these codes could explain the motivations for this policy by looking at which one was the most cited one. The main expectations concerned the different perceptions of intervening at sea: for security reasons, in the realist case, and for economic factors, for the liberal theory.

Overall, it's possible to conclude that the main realist motivation for the adoption of the 2014 MSS was the decision to tackle the maritime threats since this was the main code found by the researcher in the 2008-2014 timeframe. However, the retrieved numbers from this school are less numerous than the liberal counterparts and, particularly, references to trade in the official documents were found more than any other one of the two theories. Moreover, the comparison of the theoretical expectations with the empirical observations, drawn from the multitude of documents analysed, allows the researcher to conclude that the main motivation for the adoption of the 2014 MSS was the economic factor since the different EU government actors were concerned about the trade, for maritime tourism and, finally, for the sustainability of the blue domain. Indeed, these three concerns, which had been associated by the author with the theory of commercial liberalism because they were decisive for the EU economy, have been recognized more often than the alternative security concerns, which are typical of the realist school of thought. For this reason, the author can confirm that commercial liberalism is the best theory suited for explaining the

development and the adoption of the 2014 MSS. The results obtained from this congruence analysis aren't in line with the study of Germond (2015). Specifically, this realist scholar had argued that the motivation for the maritime operations was the achievement of safety at sea and the demonstration of the military power of EU member states. In light of the present analysis results, it's possible to conclude that, between classical realism and commercial liberalism, this latter theory is better suited to explain the reasons for the adoption of the 2014 MSS. Overall, the author can also conclude that trade was the main motivation for adopting the 2014 MSS and the main driver of commercial liberalism, within the current analysis of the two theoretical strands.

Limitations and recommendations for further research

The first limitation regards the application of this specific methodology. In particular, the analysis of documents is based on the interpretation made by the researcher, of empirical observations. The author has tried to avoid theoretical relativism through the comparison of expectations between theories to conclude which theory was congruent with the information retrieved empirically.

Furthermore, a second limitation concerns the amount of information available to the author and consequently the missing data that could have been useful for the present analysis. In particular, this limit includes protected government and military documents, which the author has not been able to access. This practical limit has led the researcher to focus on European documents available on official EU sites, on military and maritime reports and strategies approved by the individual member countries considered.

In conclusion, regarding the future avenues of research in the maritime security's field, scholars could analyse the two latest maritime operations, 2015 Sophia and 2020 Irini, to verify if they were driven by liberal factors. A similar study could be crucial to confirm the definition proposed by this study of the EU as an actor in favour of commercial liberalism. The reaffirmation of the European liberal commitment could be obtained precisely from the research in the two subsequent operations that would confirm the results of the present thesis on the 2014 MSS. Regarding 2020 Operation Sophia, did the EU want to establish its hegemony in Libya in contrast with other competitors such as Russia or neighbouring Egypt by using its military power? Or was this mission meant to protect the European economic interests present on Libyan soil? These are just a few questions that future scholars should ask themselves to verify whether subsequent developments are consistent with the interests of commercial liberalism or whether the EU has shifted its maritime interests towards a classical realism perspective in the last six years.

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